

Planning for the SAT and ACT

As a college-bound student in Mesquite, you're more than familiar with those anxiety-inducing college entrance exams: the SAT and ACT. Most students suffer from test stress – you are not alone! With the right preparation and some brushing up on your test-taking skills, you're sure to increase your test scores and achieve entrance into the college of your dreams. First, it's important to understand the ins and outs of each test. And regardless of which test you take – SAT or ACT – experts advise you to take either (or both) tests more than once so that you can increase your score on the second attempt! Look at the chart to the right to learn more about the differences between the SAT and ACT.

SAT		ACT	
When is it administered?	Seven times per year	Six times per year	
What is the test structure?	Tan-section exam: Three Critical Reading, three Math, three Writing, and one Experimental. The Experimental section is masked to look like a regular section.	Four-section exam: English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. An Experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental.	
What is the test content?	Math: up to 9th grade basic geometry and Algebra II. Science: none. Reading: sentence completions, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension. Writing: an essay and questions testing grammar, usage, and word choice.	Math: up to trigonometry. Science: charts, experiments. Reading: four passages, one each of Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science. English: stresses grammar.	
Penalty for wrong answers?	Yes.	No.	
How is the test scored?	200-800 per section, added together for a combined score. A 2400 is the highest possible combined score.	1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score. A 36 is the highest possible composite score.	
Are all scores sent to schools?	Yes. If a student requests a score report be sent to specific colleges, the report will include the scores the student received on every SAT taken.	No. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools will receive their scores AND which scores the schools will see.	
What are other uses for the exams?	Scholarship purposes.	Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs.	
Best time to register?	At least six weeks before the test date.	At least four weeks before the test date.	
Need more information?	Educational Testing Service (ETS) (609) 771-7600 www/ets.org The College Board www.collegeboard.com	ACT, Inc. (319) 337-1000 www/ACT.org	